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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PHUM EINV ENRG FR LY

SUBJECT: QADHAFI HOSTS SARKOZY FOLLOWING DEPARTURE OF BULGARIAN NURSES

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Just one day after six foreign health workers accused of intentionally spreading HIV left Libya for Bulgaria, French President Nicholas Sarkozy arrived in Tripoli on July 25 for wide-ranging discussions with Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi. Sarkozy and Qadhafi reportedly discussed construction of a nuclear water desalination plant, as well as enhanced cooperation in immigration, border security, health care, and defense procurement. Unconfirmed press reports claim the two leaders also broached the subject of Darfur. END SUMMARY.

LIBYA-FRANCE MEMORANDUM ON CIVILIAN NUCLEAR POWER

¶2. (U) President Sarkozy arrived the day after six foreign medics accused of infecting over 400 Libyan children with HIV departed the country in a French jet accompanied by Mrs. Sarkozy, who reportedly brokered their release. According to press accounts, Sarkozy and Qadhafi signed an MOU concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear power, committing France to finance construction of a long sought-after nuclear water desalination plant in Libya. (NOTE: Senior GOL officials have long lobbied for U.S. financing for a similar project, arguing such a "tangible reward" is necessary to convince the Libyan people of the utility of Libya's renouncing its WMD program. Diplomatic sources in Tripoli say that the Libyans have approached many governments, including France, Russia, China, and South Korea, with requests for both a nuclear desalination plant and a nuclear medicine center. END NOTE.)

¶3. (U) In addition, the two reportedly discussed cooperation to limit the number of illegal migrants across the Mediterranean, including a head of state conference to be held in early 2008. Sarkozy and Qadhafi also discussed French assistance to Libya's health sector, echoing promises contained in a July 23 memorandum (signed by EC Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner) that the EU would upgrade a Benghazi hospital to a regional center of excellence.

¶4. (SBU) Libyan press also reported that Sarkozy and Qadhafi discussed Darfur, just days after Sarkozy reportedly dispatched FM Kouchner to New York to lobby for quicker UNSC action on peacekeeping deployment.

QADHAFI HOLDS MEETING AGAINST BACKDROP OF U.S.-DAMAGED TRIPOLI PALACE

¶5. (SBU) Qadhafi -- accompanied by Prime Minister Al-Mahmoudi, Foreign Minister Shalgham, U/S for European Affairs Obeidi, and U/S for African Affairs Treiki -- met for several hours with Sarkozy and his delegation (which included FM Kouchner and diplomatic adviser Levitte, but not Mrs. Sarkozy) at Qadhafi's Bab Azzizia compound in Tripoli. (NOTE: Part of the compound was damaged by U.S. fighter planes during the April 1986 Operation El Dorado Canyon bombing campaign, and the GOL has kept it in its damaged state and erected a statue in front of it displaying a fist crushing a US fighter plane. Libyan media -- and Qadhafi himself -- refer to Operation El Dorado Canyon as "the failed U.S.-Atlantic aggression on the Great Jamahiriya."

END NOTE.) The GOL bussed foreign ambassadors to the compound to meet Qadhafi and Sarkozy and join the state dinner, which was held outside in front of the damaged building. Local papers gave front-page coverage to the Sarkozy visit, including one with the headline: "The Brother Leader Welcomes President Nicolas Sarkozy in front of the House that Remained Standing in the Face of the Failed American-NATO Enmity" (referring to the 1986 bombings of Tripoli). "

STEVENS